

Of Life and Fine Dining

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Summary

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A Quina story.

1. Of Life and Fine Dining

Small ripples, soft and rhythmic, danced against the weathered stones of the bridges foundation, their lapping harmonizing with the tranquil night air. A lone figure stood still, their gaze fixed on the enigmatic darkness that lay beneath the bridges arch. Treno, a city painted in vibrant hues of nightlife, pulsed with ceaseless activity, defying the conventions of other settlements that would have long surrendered to the embrace of slumber. Within the city's heart, Tetra tournaments flourished under the lemony glow of street lamps, promising hours of exhilarating competition to come.

Perched upon the polished steps leading to the tournament's domain, a woman with raven-black hair exuded an aura of impatience, her fingers drumming an uneven rhythm on her folded arms. Beside her, an empty space spoke of an absent companion—her husband, who had vowed to abstain from attendance altogether. He had promised never to try his luck again. But he remained blissfully unaware of the slowly brewing domestic scene, and similarly, the young woman was lost in

her world of vexed contemplation, paying no mind to those around her.

Engulfed by a cloud of personal troubles, the wide figured wandered with a solemn gait to the very edge of the stone bridge, a place they had unwittingly occupied far longer than they had initially considered. The world seemed distant, almost like a faded backdrop to the turmoil inside them. An unusual thought crossed their mind—the thought of taking a leap, to the depths that beckoned below. The idea, in its shocking simplicity, held a strange allure.

However, it was not a contemplation of surrender. No, their thoughts weren't consumed by a desire to end it all. Instead, they were stirred by a unique craving, one born of a distinctive perspective. Their gaze fell, not into the abyss of despair, but upon the mirrored tapestry the water held—a reflection of the moon's milky light.

A wry smile twisted on Quina's lip. In the solitude of that moment, they reached a whimsical decision—they would take part in a culinary escapade unlike any other. It wasn't that they sought to end their existence; rather, they yearned to savor the moon's reflection, to partake in a feast that

would be, by all accounts, reserved for the senses alone.

In the realm of their thoughts, they dismissed the notion that anyone would raise an eyebrow at his peculiar desire. The world, with its complicated pursuits and worries, had little space for the unconventional endeavors of one individual. And this, perhaps, was what emboldened them—the thought that their actions, though unconventional, were insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

Time flowed in strange currents as the Qu stood there, their eyes locked on the waters surface, captivated by the enigmatic orb of light nestled within. The moon's reflection gleamed, casting a delicate luminescence upon the waters embrace. And as they stood there, immersed in contemplation, they realized something curious—despite the vibrant world bustling around them, not a single soul had been drawn to the radiant feast that lay in the water's depths nor had anyone come to claim it as their own.

A memory lingered, a moment tinged with both the urge to indulge and the allure of the unknown. Quina recalled that singular occasion before when they had also contemplated taking the plunge, spurred by the sight of what they believed were fish

swimming playfully upon the waters surface. Fish, in their own way, held a flavor distinct from their favored frogs—a taste worth savoring, they thought, if only prepared with the right touch of seasoning. And while the pursuit had led to an unexpected tussle with the current, a misadventure they hadn't quite preferred, the memory carried a whimsical charm.

Reflecting upon that escapade, Quina realized that the art of catching swift fish had eluded them. It was a skill they had not yet mastered. Their instructor, the master who had guided them in the art of culinary exploration, had omitted such lessons, leading to an unintended aquatic journey. Yet, even during that less-than-gentle baptism, the thought of well-cooked, tender fish lingered, its flavor tantalizing their imagination. The memory made Quina's mouth water, a testament to their unyielding hunger and their unquenchable thirst for unique delicacies.

They shook their head, their bonnet flapping, as if to dispel the lingering reverie. Tonight, they would relinquish the tempting prize to another. Despite their voracious desires, they acknowledged a subtle shift in perspective. Quina's master's words, once resisted, now blossomed with new meaning—life

held dimensions beyond the mere pursuit of culinary pleasures. Zidane, a presence that had brushed against the Qu's world, had spoken of the profound concept of "home". What was it, this place that went beyond the mere physical confines? Was it the marshes where they had honed their culinary talents, where they had shared laughs and recipes with fellow Qu's?

Quina pondered, the quiet of the night a canvas for introspection. Zidane's words, echoing in his mind, intertwined with their own thoughts. Perhaps a place, a true home, was where one was the happiest. And as they stood on that bridge, contemplating the glossy reflection dancing in the water, they found themselves glimpsing at a new perspective—a world filled not only with the delectable, but with connections and emotions that were equally fulfilling. In that fleeting moment of revelation, Quina, the daydream believer, stood at the precipice of a deeper understanding, poised to savor more than just flavors—to savor life itself.

As Quina meandered down the worn stone pathway, thoughts tumbled through their mind like dice in the hands of fate. Amid the medley of ruminations, a question unfurled—a question they had rarely entertained before crossed their mind;

what truly brought them happiness? The initial answer came as naturally as breathing. Happiness blossomed when they indulged in the pleasures of eating. But life's complexities refused to be confined within such a simple vessel. Outside the comfort of their marshy realm, this world demanded Gil if one sought to enjoy the delectable morsels beyond their grasp. The idea was as baffling as brewing a recipe that resulted in gold coins.

The bustling scene shifted around them, drawing them into a jumbled symphony of voices and actions. Among the throng, an irate man's tirade pierced the air. His wealth was evident, a cloak woven of opulence, but the contents of his plate shattered his veneer of civility. His voice, both abrasive and entitled, lashed out at the unfortunate waiter, invoking the gods of haughty nobility.

Quina's attention was ensnared, and they couldn't resist the allure of the scene—the spectacle of privilege encountering the limits of culinary artistry. In the heated exchange, the waiter struggled to cobble together an apology that would pacify the irate diner. But apologies were flimsy shields against the man's torrent of indignation.

However, Quina's whimsical nature couldn't remain a mere observer. The words tumbled from their lips, a culinary intervention that hinted at worldliness. "This food not spoiled, just need more seasoning. Potatoes need longer cook, too." And in the blink of an eye, the situation took an unexpected turn. The attention of both the irate man and the meek waiter snapped to the Qu's presence.

The man's bluster was briefly eclipsed by surprise as their gaze met. His face contorted into an expression that perfectly encapsulated annoyance at the interruption. "Wait, who the hell are you!?" he sputtered, his pompous demeanor faltering as Quina's tongue dangled mere inches from his face. His outrage seemed to diffuse into something more like alarm as Quina's wide gait swung closer.

And so, words escaped Quina again, a mumble barely above a whisper. "Are you hiding more yummy yummies?" The question hung in the air, almost absurd in the moment, yet infused with their signature blend of earnest curiosity.

"N-No!" The man's voice quivered with unease, his recoil almost comical in its urgency. The unsatisfactory meal quickly became forgotten, eclipsed by Quina's intrusion.

“Why are you hiding yummy yummies?” Quina’s voice was louder this time, and their steps mirrored the increasing volume as they pursued the man. The questioning was relentless, a collision of culinary ethics and societal norms. The man’s protests and stammers reverberated in the air, mixing with the chaotic energy of the scene.

“I-I don’t know what you’re talking about! Gods, don’t eat me!” The man’s tone had shifted from indignant to desperate, his pleas bordering on hysteria as he raced away.

But Quina’s resolve was unyielding, driven by a creed etched into their being—food was meant to be shared, not hoarded. “I no let you take yummies that no belong to you!” They roared, giving chase as culinary justice interwove with the frenzy of the chase. As the pursuit unfolded, Quina remained steadfast, driven by a simple yet profound truth: stealing food was simply no good.

...

Quina’s sigh echoed like a gentle breeze. It was a breath that seemed to carry the weight of a world filled with culinary adventures crossed with ethical dilemmas. They retraced their steps, a lone figure returning to the scene of the fleeting pursuit. His

steadfast run had been spirited, a valiant endeavor against the tide of human swiftness. Yet, the man had proven more deft than Quina's frog-like bounds. The difference in their speed couldn't be side-stepped by resolve alone, and in the end, the elusive man had vanished.

Quina understood the ethics governing their unique abilities—they wielded magic not as a capricious tool, but to preserve life and safety. So, the prospect of employing magic for the sake of capturing a food pilferer didn't align with those sentiments. Furthermore, the stolen morsels were likely no longer fit for consumption, robbed of their culinary allure by the escapade.

As the Qu approached the restaurant, a new presence beckoned—a man in a flour-stained apron, his demeanor a mixture of curiosity and trepidation. The man ventured forward, his voice tentative as he addressed Quina. The conversation, devoid of hostility, held an air of curiosity.

Quina's reply was simple and direct, their demeanor lacking any malice. The man identified himself as Juan, the proprietor of the establishment where the incident had unfolded. Quina listened, absorbing the man's words with a detached yet

discerning air. The topic of the conversation shifted to the seasoning—or lack thereof—that had drawn Quina’s commentary. Juan’s earnest curiosity spurred him to inquire about the exact seasonings that would have elevated the dish.

Quina responded with a candor that matched their unorthodox perspective on seasoning. “It still bland,” they declared, a verdict punctuated by a decisive shake of the head. “Just adding pepper only make more hot; it no make more flavor. You need add salt and garlic to make the potatoes not taste like dirt. And you no cook them long enough!” The words carried an authority born of a life spent savoring the nuances of flavor.

The revelation struck a chord with Juan. His own culinary sensibilities seemed to be recalculating in response to Quina’s insights. Humbly, he sought guidance—could Quina impart their expertise to salvage the restaurant’s waning reputation?

Quina, however, remained cautious. The concept of conveying their culinary alchemy through mere words was daunting. “No,” the Qu replied curtly, the word echoing with his apprehension.

Juan persisted, a mix of determination and humility reflecting in his eyes. And Quina, the

culinary enigma, gave in to the pleas. “If I tell you, you mess it up. I show you how you should cook it.”

The transition from conversation to action was seamless. Quina strode into the kitchen, an authoritative presence that swept aside line cooks in their wake. Their movements were a dance of purpose, each motion a declaration of culinary authority. Juan’s protests, though good natured, were swiftly quelled by a glance of sheer resolve from Quina.

The pot landed atop the stove, a precursor to the culinary symphony that was about to unfold. Quina’s words became instructions, imparted with the confidence of someone who had wielded ladles and tasted creations innumerable. Even the kitchen’s hidden treasures, like their “secret recipe” soup and “mystery rub” boars leg, didn’t escape the Qu’s scrutiny. Their dismissal echoed with conviction that culinary endeavors should not be veiled in secrecy.

Juan, once the voice of reluctance, stood in the presence of expertise, humbled by Quina’s wisdom. The restaurant was set to be their canvas, a place where Quina would wield their artistry. As the pot simmered and ingredients harmonized under Quina’s

watchful eye, the kitchen transformed into a classroom of flavors.

Above the sizzle and aroma, Juan stood at the precipice of revelation, a man poised to embrace Quina's unconventional yet profound approach to food. In that moment, the boundaries between species dissolved, and the art of taste became a bridge connecting two souls—one driven by an insatiable quest for flavors, the other fueled by a desire to sate the hungry hearts of patrons.

Quina, the eccentric Chef, was here to share their culinary ethos, to breathe life into the kitchen and rekindle the flames of flavor. In this culinary exchange, Quina was not just a frog in a world of humans; they were a master of taste, an embodiment of joy, and a singular force set to transform dining from a mere act to a transcendental experience.

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